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ABSTRACT

Although multiple perspectives of democracy are reflected among the diverse people that make up the United States, two crucial elements of democracy are the creation of a public space for a continuous conversation promoting freedom of expression and tolerance, and the importance of compassion. Yet, one of the most basic conflicts in any system, be it a society, a family, or a classroom, is the tension between freedom and control over destructive behaviors. In the classroom, for example, control in the form of discipline should go beyond maintaining classroom order and managing behaviors; it should focus on the development of a compassionate, caring relationship with students and the creation of situations in which they can develop discipline within themselves. Public spaces that promote democratic conversation and self-discipline can be created based on the educational technique of zones of proximal development. Educational spaces can be created that allow for play, provide opportunities for collective problem solving and growth, and implement intersubjectivity, the coordination of different perspectives. Governmental policies should also be based on coordinating competing perspectives. Priorities for the 1990s should include support for the family, a reflective and caring pedagogy in schools, and an emphasis on human fellowship instead of race, class, or gender affiliation. (Contains 20 references.) (BCY)

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THE STRUGGLES OF DEMOCRACY:

AN AGENDA FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN THE 1990'S

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Last spring, when I was asked to participate in this forum and to give Jay a title of my talk, I came up with the title, "The struggles of democracy: An agenda for children and families in the 1990s." In retrospect, I find this exercise of coming up with this title, at that time rather ironic. For, when I chose this title I did not give it much thought that on this day when I am going to talk to you, we are in the midst of an election campaign, and at a time when this country and the world are critically re-examining the historical significance and influences of Christopher Columbus. All in all, the notion, or, maybe the illusion of "democracy' is in the center of all the presidential debates. At least the word "democracy" is being used frequently. It is found in the language of the political pundits; in the titles and themes of numerous TV and radio programs; and in the conversations of men, women and children everywhere. With all the emphasis on democracy, I hope my talk does not turn into a election year political message.

I chose this topic because of a number of things that I have been involved in the last of couple of years. These experiences have challenged me to think about the notion of democracy and its effects on children and families. I will share some of these stories with you, so you may gain an understanding of where I am coming from in constructing my notion of democracy.

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In the last couple of years my friends and colleagues, many of them are here today, and I have continuously examined and explored the complex issues underlying the concept of multiculturalism from a sociocultural perspective. In this process we have created a space for conversation about our idiosyncratic notions, positions, and possibilities. It has been a rewarding learning experience for me. In this space we speak freely, as equals, tolerant of diverse points of view; in an atmosphere where we care for and value each other as human beings. Are these not the fundamental elements of a **democracy**? I learned a great deal from my colleagues about human development from a breadth of inter-disciplinary perspectives. But, more importantly, from their personal beliefs and lived-stories; I have learned a great deal about myself as a person living in a pluralistic society, the U.S.A. So, my examination and re-construction of the notion of democracy is, in part, a reflection of this experience.

Another experience is our research project on reflective teaching. I am not going to detail the various objectives and preliminary findings of this research today, but, I would like to point out that in being a reflective teacher, a reflective practitioner, a reflective parent or learner; we have to create an environment or space that encourages open conversation built on all the elements of **democracy** I mentioned earlier. In addition to being reflective, it is crucial for us to be **thoughtful in** our actions. Thoughtful reflections on the life stories of others prompt us to look at the larger context in which children and

families live and experience in our society.

Last Spring, Andy Stremmel and I team-taught a course on multiculturalism (& by the way we will be offering it again next semester). We tried, in this course, to create a space for conversation so that **we** and the students together could examine multiculturlism in a tolerant environment that promotes freedom of expression, a sense of equality and community, of respect and concern for each other, i.e., caring. We have learned and changed in this process. I hope we have achieved that, not only through my own lenses but through the lenses of all those who participated in this enterprise. Again, are these not the basic elements of a **democracy?**

I took the liberty of telling you these stories, because I have come to believe that lived-stories are important. Life stories of family members, colleagues, students, peers, etc. prompt reflection and in understanding different standpoint in context. These experiences, and others, have prompted me to reflect on the notion of democracy as a way of life, that is, living our lives in families, schools, workplaces, other social institutions, **and** in the interactions among these systems in looking at the ecology of human development. You will **also** find that my ideas of a democracy are influenced by my background in child development and early childhood education.

Being an immigrant, the seductiveness of the notion of democratic government in the United State, has always been a part of my growing up years. I, as many Chinese heard about the

"Country with the Flamboyant/Flowery Flag," Hwa-Chi, a nickname for the U.S.A., the land of freedom and opportunity. I heard the tales of many Chinese elders who dreamed the "American Dream." Although I had never really taken democracy for granted nor had I given its meaning much thought until more recently. I have learned in recent years the importance of examining one's standpoint from sociocultural and sociohistorical perspectives. I am reminded by Amy Ling's book, Between worlds (that examines the work of women writers of Chinese ancestry); and Maxine Greene, in The dialectic of freedom that I am, one of those "persons who could never take freedom for granted in this country: Women, members of minority groups, immigrants, newcomers." (Greene, p. 55). Thus inevitably what I am going to share with you, are ideas that have influenced my reconstruction of the notion of democracy. It reflects my sentiments of the ideals of freedom, equality, tolerance and human life.

I remember when I was a student in Greensboro, North Carolina, during the "Woolworth" sit-ins that started the civil rights movement of the 1960s. The struggle for democracy was at its height. I saw my black and white friends expressing opposing positions with great passion. In trying to understand their standpoints, both groups told me that I could not really understand their feelings because I had not walked in their shoes. But, I know now that historical incident exemplifies the continuous struggles of a democracy. There will always be those who are "between-worlds". As Amy Ling said, the very condition of being

between-worlds "On the one hand, . . can be interpreted to mean occupying the space or gulf between two banks; one is thus in a state of suspension, accepted by neither side and therefore truly belonging nowhere. . . On the other hand, viewed from a different perspective, being between worlds may be considered as having footholds on both banks and therefore belonging to two worlds at once . . ." (p. 177) I have accepted the latter point of view and look at diversity as a source of challenge and opportunity. Marian Wright Edelman (1992) reminds us that, "Race and gender are givens of God, which neither you nor anyone else chose or earned at birth. Your race is a fact. Being racist and sexist is a state of mind and a choice . . . Let's face up to rather than ignore our racial (and I might add gender problems) which are America's historical and future Archills' heel." (p. 54)

What is democracy?

Multiple perspectives of democracy are reflected among diverse people here in the U.S. and elsewhere in this world. Look at the current presidential campaign and its rhetoric, and we can sample a range of defining characteristics of democracy and a range of interpretations of these characteristics (or moral values). The liberals, the conservatives and the ultra-conservatives have very different interpretations of democracy and the role of the government. These positions barely cover the tip of the iceberg with many variations beneath. This is maybe the hallmark of democracy that there is a freedom for interpretation and action.

Different ideologies of the notion of democracy, are in fact

inferred "realities" of lived lives of people of very diverse economic, cultural and educational circumstance. The dynamic ideological nature of democracy encourages us to look to the future. It encourages us to engage in social reconstruction of democracy in changing social contexts. A model of universally accepted perfect democracy has never existed, nor will it ever exist. Democracy is a 'blueprint' of the ecology of human development that reflects a shared assumption, among people, of "how things could be." (Garbarino, 1982, p. 24). As with all blueprints it could be in "error" and needs to be evaluated and reconstructed in the public space.

I would like to focus my examination of democracy, as you may already have gathered from my stories, on two crucial levels: (1) the creation of a public space for continuous conversation that promotes freedom of expression, equality of participation, tolerance of diversity, and valuing of human life; and (2) the importance of being compassionate and caring in our struggles for a democratic way of life.

I will begin by sharing with you a few definitions of **democracy;** followed by examining some of the principles of democracy; then, with some examples from child development; and finally, my recommdendations for an agenda for children and families.

First, Democracy, in terms of government, has been used as follows: the participation of all citizens, rich and poor, from diverse backgrounds, in electing their representative government;

as the guarantee of each citizen's equality before the law; as social and economic opportunity with an egalitarian tendency to create a free society of equals; or as the consent of the governed who see in the protection of both freedom and the dignity of man and women the chief aim of government (Cecil, 1990, p. 15).

Second, democracy as a way of life has been conceptualized by many people, including John Dewey (1940) who viewed democracy as "a life of social progress and reform." As an educator and an activist, I like this viewpoint. For I see the struggles of democracy, as a life full of contradictions, which means that it is full of tensions among contrasting principles: freedom vs. control, security vs. risk, self vs. other, right vs. wrong, real vs. ideal, the interest of the person vs. the interest of society, and so on.

Third, democracy is a "site" or a "public space" of struggle, i.e., "a social practice that is informed by competing ideological concepts of power, politics, and community" (Giroux, 1988, p. 29) **Or**, as described by Maxine Greene, "the making and remaking of a public space, a space of dialogue and possibility . . a continuing effort to attend to many voices, many languages, often ones submerged in cultures of silence . . . The aim is to find (or create) a public space, that is, one in which diverse human beings can appear before one another . . . 'the best they know how to be." (p. xi) In this space, those who are submerged in cultures of silence **can** participate, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and functional

status.

Conversation enhances the possibility of moving towards what might be or ought to be. W. E. B. DeBois (1903/1982) said that "questions of social equality" should be addressed directly and should not be silenced. I believe, in a democratic society, we have the right and opportunity to evaluate, decide and compare competing cultural idealogies in terms of what is in the best interest of human development.

Central to the notion of democracy, is free speech. I would suggest that it is more than free speech but also active listening to what people with different voices are saying. (We all have often heard people using similar words and phrases with very different meanings. It also reminds me of the Simon and Garfunkle song, "Sound of Silence." The power of silence from those who are in power, may in their silence, silence those who are submerged in cultures of silence. These conflicting and competing beliefs, voices; on one level, may have contributed to the difficulty in our attempts to deal with problems in families, in schools and in society; yet, on another level, they can be looked upon as resources that can be used critically and collectively to construct new approaches to solving family, school and other social problems.

Tolerance, is another fundamental principle of democracy. In a public space for conversation we have to be tolerant of those with whom we disagree. Since democracy is not perfect and is constantly evolving there are differences of opinion. The freedom

to disagree is a sign of the strength of democracy. Continuous search for truth is the legacy of freedom of the mind (Cecil, 1990; Dewey, 1937/1940).

As Dewey had stated:

> The democratic idea of freedom is not the right of each individual to do as he pleases, even if it be qualified by adding "provided he does not interfere with the same freedom on the part of others." While the idea is not always, not often enough, expressed in words, the basic freedom is that of freedom of mind and of whatever degree of freedom of action and experience is necessary to produce freedom of intelligence. (Dewey, 1937/1840, p. 341)

The media created notion of "political correctness" provides a context in which the notion of tolerance is challenged.

Should tolerance be extended to those who are determined to destroy other's effort to find truth? (Cecil, p. 43)

Should some "truths," for example, conceived by certain groups be silenced because they are outside the limits of tolerance?

Are there limits to tolerance?

Yes, I believe there are limits to tolerance. "There is a fine line between the creative power of tolerance and the license to destroy."

Oliver Wendell Holmes (cited in Cecil, 1990) stated that although the best test of truth "is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market." However, he

was also of the opinion that "where such thoughts tend to unleash division in a society--a division that may lead to riots and destruction--tolerance should be exercised only within limits of the preservation of public order and of legitimate constitutional procedures" (Cecil, p. 21).

As Cecil (1990) pointed out, in Equality, tolerance, and loyalty: "As paradoxical as it may sound, intolerance of intolerance defends tolerance, while tolerance of intolerance defeats the principles of tolerance and with it one of the essential prerequisites of democracy." (p. 21)

A pluralistic perspective also challenges us to be more tolerant of and creative in living our lives, and for those in dominant groups to share their powers in making social policies that affect human life. That is, as expressed in the current "buzz word" empowering diverse groups to actively participate in this democratic society.

Maxine Greene and Andrew A. Cecil, among others, have pointed out that people often perceive freedom from an individualistic perspective. From this stance, freedom "signifies a self-dependence rather than relationship; self-regarding and self-regulated behavior rather than involvement with others." (Greene, p. 7) This perspective, I believe, could undermine the principle that with freedom there are certain duties and responsibilities to others. That is, duty to make responsible decisions that protect the rights of others to be free and equal. For protecting the rights of others is the most effective means of securing one's own

freedom (Cecil, p. 20)

The danger of viewing the democratic principles of freedom as self-dependence, individual choice, or autonomy, i.e., from an individualistic perspective, is the possibility of neglecting the welfare of our fellow human beings. Or, perhaps, phrased in another way, may lead to social indifference. Ellen Condfiffe Legemann recently raise the question, "Why is social indifference so rife in the United States today?" The social problems of today, e.g., violence, substance abuse, poverty, crises in education, and health care among others, are often considered as isolated issues without taking into account the inter-relatedness of these issues within and across institutions and systems. Furthermore, these discussions often do not take into account the competing ideologies of a democracy and their impact on human development. We need electoral leadership that understands the reciprocal relationship between individual and social well-being. (Legemann, 1992)

Carol Gilligan (1982), In a different voice, distinguishes in the construction of morality from the perspective of morality of human rights and morality of responsibility. I see in this distinction different notions of democracy. The former, is the "rugged individualist," free, autonomous, and self-serving, believing in the "right to do as he pleases without interfering with somebody else's rights" (p. 30); vs. the latter, who represents a different value that subscirbes to the belief that "choices being made in a fabric of mutuality and concern, of ongoing dialogue and conversation, of cooperation rather than

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competition . . ." (Greene, p.84)

Robert Wuthnow (1991), the Princeton sociologist, in his recent book Acts of compassion, argued that we need to be aware of the importance of the **sociological** side of **compassion.** That is, compassion as a **"social good** . . . a commitment to those who may not be able to reciprocate, an acknowledgement of our essential identities as human beings, and a devotion to the value of caring itself." (p. 301) Freedom, success, and self-interest are perhaps the most prized legacy of our national ideology of democracy and goals to be pursued i.e., what is popularly referred to as "American individualism." (p. 13) However, I see, from an ecological standpoint, the reality is that the pursuit of these goals are influenced by certain social, political and moral constraints and opportunities.

Wuthnow told stories of compassion and caring. Stories of individuals who have achieved a balance between individual freedom and choice and a sense of caring for the freedom of others and the community. He raised questions, such as:

> "How is it that (certain people) are able to be rugged individualist and so deeply compassionate at the same time?
>
> "How is it that we as a people are able . . . to show care and compassion in so many ways to those around us, and still be a nation of individualists who pride ourselves on personal freedom, individual success, and the pursuit of self-interest?
>
> How do we reconcile these paradoxical elements in our

tradition?" (p. 17)

I think a possible answer to these questions can be found in Maxine Greene's proposition that we shall look for "freedom developed by human beings who have acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others, human beings become 'challengers' ready for alternatives, alternatives that include caring and community." (p. 56) Although Nel Noddings (1984) in her book, Caring, does not address the issue of caring in term of reciprocity in the context of freedom, her ethical stance has implication in my exploration of this concept. She wrote, "Caring preserves both the group and the individual and, . . . it limits our obligation so that it may realistically be met. It will not allow us to be distracted by vision of universal love, perfect justice, or a world unified under principle." (p. 101)
I believe that, in making decisions and policies for the good of others we need to be sensitive to the ideal of caring and promote the acts of caring. My opinion is that, parents and educators have the duty to be caring, to be committed to caring, and to promote that ideal in our interactions with children.

One of the basic and most obvious conflicts in any system is the tension between freedom and control. This conflict is found between people everywhere -- in families, in classrooms, in neighborhoods, and in society in general. "Associated with freedom are notions such as autonomy, independence, choice, license, liberty, room, latitude. In contrast, the language of control is associated with ideas such as order, system, discipline, rule,

regulation, precept, organization." (According to Van Manen, 1991, p. 61) Are these not the same competing ideas underlying the notion of democracy? As teachers and parents, we know that children need both freedom and order, and we are constantly trying to strike a balance between when and how to actively guide the child and letting the child construct his or her knowledge of the physical and the social worlds.

Are these not the same issues we deal with in teaching our undergraduate and graduate classes? At home, at work, in your department, and in other social situations?

Are these, **also**, not the same issues we deal with in a democratic society in terms of the relative role of the government and how do we support children and families in their struggle for human rights?

I would like to illustrate this with a scenario from a teaching-learning situation. With some reflection you may see how it plays out in other relationships and interactions, for example, between parent and child, between partners, between colleagues and between social institutions.

The issue is classroom discipline. The scenario takes place in a fourth grade classroom, a case study, adapted from Van Manen's (1991) book, <u>The tact of teaching</u>:

> "A teacher has just read a short story and she asks the students to reflect on the reason why the main character of the story acted in the way he did, Immediately Rodney speaks up, "This is just a stupid story. Nobody

in his right mind would do a stupid thing like that. I do not see why we have to deal with this stupid stuff." (p. 199)

Can you think of similar type of situations?

How does the teacher feel? How would you feel?

What should she do? What would you do?

The teacher probably feels annoyed by Rodney's condemnation. Students who would otherwise have been inquisitive, and wanted to participate in the discussion, now seem disinterested or infected by Rodney's mocking attitude.

The teacher could be irritated and said to Rodney, "I have no intention of arguing with you about this. I am very much resentful of your negative attitude . . ." and so on.

Although the teacher may feel understandably resentful toward this student who seem to let no opportunity pass to criticize, disturb, and agitate. But to meet defiance with vengeful ridicule and threat of failure does not contribute to the atmosphere of learning.

However, if the teacher has come to expect this kind of response from Rodney, she might, more thoughtfully try to prevent him from speaking before his turn, and find ways that will give other students opportunity to engage in the discussion. For example, she might say to the class: "Please take a moment to reflect on the theme of the story . . . and in a moment I will call on some of you to share your thoughts . . ." (pp. 199-200)

The goal of discipline is beyond maintaining classroom order and management of behaviors. A teacher's, or a parent's, attitude

toward discipline is reflected in one's orientation to freedom, control and order.

In working with teachers, I find that one of the areas of pedagogy they consistently want more knowledge of and help with is, classroom management and discipline. In classroom observations we find teachers who are ill-prepared, who do not have a good sense of self, get into power (control vs. freedom) struggles with children, even young preschool children; which often lead to disruptive, inattentive and rebellious behaviors. Resulting in, quote, "a teacher's having a discipline problem."

We find teachers in such a mode of teaching trying "to put a lid on things," thinking that they are in control. But, in effect, they either do not understand or have forgotten about what in our field is called "developmentally appropriate practice." That is, to work with the child in his or her zone of proximal development, seeing the situation from the child's perspective, while reflecting on one's own actions and their effects of the child. Some teachers would, for example, blame the victim, the child, for being too young (too immature) or too old (too advanced) to be in her class. Thus, isolating the child from the classroom by being "tagged" as a problem; or physically isolating or removing the child through misuse and overuse of what is commonly called "time out," or sending the child to the principal's office. Some other teachers would resort to using behavioral control techniques, e.g., assertive discipline, or discipline of fear; that do not promote self-reflection and self-discipline, but learning through external

control that are not related to the child's real life. Don't we see this type interchange, of power, control, and isolation, happening in other segments of our society?

Discipline through the rule of fear: failure, rejection, ridicule, sarcasm, punishment, humiliation is "false discipline" (Van Manen, 1991). The adult fails to present to the child ways to develop self-discipline. Whereas, in pedagogically significant discipline the adult develops a compassionate, caring relationship with the child and creates situations in which the child can develop discipline within himself/herself.

My reason for using discipline as an example is because it is closely related to the notion of democracy. How it is used, reflects whether we create a caring space for conversation, that embraces the principles of freedom, equality and tolerance in teaching-learning, childrearing, and/or family interactions. Van Manen (1991) points out that:

> The term **discipline** is related to the notion of **disciple** (someone who follows a great teacher or a great example), and also to the notion of **docere** (meaning to teach), and to the term **doctor** (a learned person). A disciplined person is prepared to learn and to be influenced toward order. (pp. 198-199)

Thus a disciplined person, whether at home, at school, or elsewhere in various spaces created for conversation, I hope, is prepared to learn.

I would like to go back to John Dewey and his vision of

democracy as a way of life and its implications for socialization. The conventional (traditional) wisdom of education is the maxim "Education is a preparation for life." Whereas, for Dewey, **education is not a preparation <u>for</u> life. It <u>is</u> life or growth.** He said that, "The good life is not a vision to be held before the pupil as a distant reward for enduring and suffering the hardships of education. The qualities of the good life should be inherent qualities of the educative process" (p. x) In a changing society, says Dewey, "to prepare (the child) for future life means to give him command of himself, it means so to train him that he will have the full and ready use of all his capacities." (p. x)

How do we create a public space that promotes democratic conversation?

Because of my background in child development and ECE, I would like to make a recommendation based on the concepts of "zone of proximal development," "intersubjectivity" and the concept of caring. Please bear with me while I be-labor a bit in explaining these concepts and how I see that they function in promoting democracy. The ZPD is conceptualized as a social system or as Lewis C. Moll called it a "hospitable and accommodating building for education. . . " Within this zone, whether it is between adult and child or between peers, is the possibility for change. First, according to Vygotsky, in this zone is the capacity for play, for imagination. " . . . he meant that in order to grow and develop people need to be able to think of themselves in a way that is different from the way they are now." (McNamee, p. 288) Second,

according to Bruner (1962) in this zone is the capacity to make use of the help of others, the capacity to benefit from give-and-take in experiences and conversations with others. That is, in this community, or "building," or public space there are opportunities to talk, to ask questions, to seek help, and to engage in joint problem-solving. Collectively there is the possibility for growth and development, for **change**. The concept of "intersubjectivity," i.e., a sharing of purpose or focus in the coordination of perspectives (Rommetveit, 1985; Trevarthen, 1980), is of crucial importance in the interactions within the ZPD. In being able to engage in meaningful activity or conversation with others, we must work together to determine a common ground for communication in order for us to understand the interests, values and goals that we expect of each other (Fu, Stremmel, & Stone, 1992). Also crucial to "connected teaching" and connected conversation is, **caring**. Caring is described by Nel Noddings' (1984) as:

> Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one-caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other . . . (to sustain this feeling) . . . I must make a commitment to act. . . (p. 16)

Thus, caring, I believe, involves establishing and maintaining

intersubjectivity between partners.

I hope you see, as I do, how people with different voices and ideologies can create **a public space for dialogue,** built on the principles of the zone of proximal development. In this space everyone is empowered to struggle for the rights and privileges of a democracy.

Debates on levels of governmental control, interference, and deregulation, etc. reflect competing perspectives on freedom and equality. I believe that policies should reflect our concern about the welfare of our fellow human beings. At this time in history, with limited resources and competing expectations of equality, what is the government's responsibility to meet our expectations? What should be the priorities for children and families on the political agenda?

My agenda for children and families in the 1990s is not, necessarily, a political agenda. My use of the term "policy" is in a general sense, as when we say, "It is a good policy to do . . . such and such" However, I believe that the **social** woman and **social** man need also be the **political** woman and **political** man. In a participatory democracy we have to take action, speak out for, and empower those who are alienated so they can also enjoy the rights and privileges of a democracy. Thus, my hope and vision is that these so-called "they are good policies to. . ." policies will guide us in taking social and political actions that will transform them into personal and political policies that support children and families.

The Children's Defense Fund's focus in 1992 is "leave no child behind." I would like to revise it to say, "leave no one behind." All children and all families need to be valued and supported. It is a time for America to come together, to join in the struggles of democracy. The struggles of democracy will always be here, but we need to be inclusive by empowering others to participate in the struggle.

I have three broad priorities on my agenda for children and families. **First**, families' crucial role of nurturing the next generation needs to be valued and supported by their employers, by their communities, and by their governments. They need support and care so they can live their lives with dignity: To have food, clothing, and shelter; to be free from violence in the home and the neighborhood; to have good schools for their children; and to be able to meet their work-family needs with affordable and quality child care, adult care, health care, **and** jobs. (CDF, 1992)

Second, we need a pedagogy of connected teaching, where teachers and students share teaching-learning responsibilities in ways that promote democracy as a way of life. As Dewey (1903/1940) said, "The comprehensive purpose of education in a democracy is so to develop its young that they will be able to fulfill the intelligent functions of free individuals living in and working for a free society." (p. xiii) We need reflective and caring teachers who will work collaboratively in their students' ZPDs. Caring teachers are described by M. Greene (1988) as those:

who (try) to look through students' eyes, to struggle with

them as subjects in search of their own projects, their own ways of (knowing) or making sense of the world. It is to interpret from as many vantage points as possible lived experience, the ways there are of being in the world. (p. 120)

Third, we need, as proposed by Mariam Wright Edelman (1992), to "remember and help America remember that the fellowship of human beings is more important than the fellowship of race and class and gender in a democratic society." (p. 54)

I would like to close by quoting from James Garbarino (1992). This quotation summarizes my sentiments and vision of an agenda for children and families in America, in an eloquent way:

> There is and there will continue to be an increasing flexibility and innovation in human relations. Traditional forms of family will not be replaced, but will instead exist alongside less long-lasting unions, single parents, groups of adults (related and unrelated, heterosexual and homosexual) living together and raising children, amidst a break down on gender roles in society. A customs and institutions, formerly required for economic survival, give way to more chosen and voluntary ties, we face an opportunity and a challenge to increase our capacity to meet people's needs for intimacy, love and meaning, **and** b build social institutions that support these goals. The family will exist as long as we recognize and respond to our needs for close lifelong bonds. . . We (know) how important family life

is to human development through the entire span of life. Families are in crisis because of unsupportive social environments and cultural challenges. We need a sense of toleration to new and different family forms along with a commitment to the enduring needs of children and parents. The community, our institutions, and all of society must move carefully and respectfully around families, so as not to disturb the fragile and terribly important process going on within them--the building and sustenance of human beings." (p. 95)

Thank you.

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